

Summarised inspection findings

Crossmichael School

Dumfries and Galloway Council

1 September 2026

Key contextual information

Crossmichael Primary School is in the village of Crossmichael in Dumfries and Galloway.

At the time of inspection, the roll was 65 children across three classes. The senior leadership team consists of a headteacher who has been in post since 2024 and one principal teacher who took up post in August 2025. The headteacher is also the head of a partner school.

Across the school almost all children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Deciles 5, 6 and 7. In P6 and P7, 18% of children are registered for free school meals.

1.3 Leadership of change	very good
This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are: ■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community ■ strategic planning for continuous improvement ■ implementing improvement and change	

- The headteacher is highly regarded across the community. She models empathetic leadership, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children. The headteacher led the community through a wide-ranging stakeholder engagement to ensure that the school’s vision values and aims reflected the community. The community has ownership of the school values of respectful, eco-friendly, achieving, creative and healthy, due to its participation in the process. Recent consultation about the school’s positive relationship policy was welcomed and mirrored this process. Parents have welcomed this updated, values-based approach. Most parents feel that their views are taken into account when changes to the school are being considered. Children and staff model the school values in all of their interactions. Children are very proud when this behaviour is rewarded by house points or acknowledgement at assemblies.
- The headteacher has a firm understanding of the areas of strength within the school and a sharp focus on areas for improvement. Planning for improvement is shared between Crossmichael Primary School and its partner school. The headteacher, in consultation with staff and pupils, identifies those areas which are joint priorities and those for an individual school. She manages the pace of change well, with helpful guidance on the steps needed for each priority to be achieved. For example, she identified rightly that improving writing attainment was a key priority. Staff have reviewed approaches to their teaching of writing and areas for improvement were identified. Children have enjoyed this change in approach and speak confidently of their strengths in writing and discuss targets to improve their writing.
- Stakeholders are actively involved in developing the school improvement plan (SIP). The SIP reflects local, national and school priorities. The headteacher ensures that the number of priorities is balanced well across areas of the curriculum and that these are manageable. Regular professional discussions take place with staff to track progress in priorities and to

amend timelines as required. The headteacher and principal teacher have well established quality assurance processes in place. They focus on ensuring that the work of the school is supporting children to make progress in their learning. There are regular reviews of children's work, lesson observations and teachers' plans for learning. The headteacher shares a helpful summary of quality assurance findings with staff. This supports them to understand strengths and next steps for the school improvement.

- All children participate in focus groups that are linked to their house group. Each house group has an area of responsibility, and children work with staff to identify activities that will positively impact their community. Older children have a range of leadership roles which support them to model the school values, such as being an eco-friendlier school. They articulate the ways that they have improved their school through ideas like their interest in outdoor learning being reflected in lessons and attractive play areas introduced. Younger children enjoy being part of their house group discussions. Staff have identified that there is scope for more meaningful leadership activities for younger children to develop their team working and leadership skills.
- The enthusiastic and motivated staff team is empowered to lead aspects of school improvement. Examples of this include developing approaches to play pedagogy, expanding pupil voice, approaches to teaching writing and developing the school's outdoor learning progressive pathway. Teachers are supported by senior leaders to share their learning with other schools. For example, the school's outdoor learning pathway has been shared with the partner school. Children across the partnership are developing their knowledge of the local environment and how they can enjoy and protect their local area.
- The headteacher works with staff on an embedded and appropriate professional review and development process. This is linked to national standards, the current SIP and teachers' skills and strengths. Staff feel that the headteacher knows them well and her encouragement of them instils confidence in them to take leadership project. All staff are committed to improving outcomes for children and work well as a team to achieve this. Teachers' individual leadership skills and areas of responsibility are positively impacting on the experiences of children across the curriculum.
- The headteacher consults with stakeholders, including the Parent Council, to identify priorities for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). She has a clear view and understanding of how funding should support the improvement of attainment for children who may be impacted by socio-economic factors. The headteacher should continue to review the strategic approach to raising attainment for all children.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The headteacher and staff create an inclusive climate that supports children well to learn. They provide inviting, well-resourced areas for learning in classrooms and in other spaces around the school. This supports children's engagement and motivation. Teachers know and understand children as individuals and are responsive to their needs and interests.
- All staff have strong positive relationships with children. They offer children nurturing care and support during lessons and throughout the school day. Teachers and children have worked together to develop classroom charters which align well with the school values and rights-based learning. These outline clear, shared expectations of behaviour. Charters are used effectively by staff and children to sustain a calm, supportive learning environment. Almost all children behave very well.
- Most children are keen to learn and show sustained engagement during lessons and activities. They access helpful resources and information with increasing independence in their classroom and other learning spaces around the school. They enjoy opportunities to personalise aspects of their learning and decide how to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Most children work well independently, in pairs and in groups. At times, a few children can become distracted or distract others, such as talking during teacher input. They benefit from well-timed support and prompts from staff which help them to re-engage with their learning and activities.
- Outdoor learning is an essential context in the school community's approach to learning and teaching. Staff, partners and volunteers deliver and support highly engaging learning experiences. Teachers make creative use of the school grounds, the village, local woodlands, the loch shore and other natural environments. Children find outdoor learning highly motivating and they develop a range of transferable skills for life and learning. Children are knowledgeable about their local area, environmental issues and learning for sustainability. They demonstrate well-developed understanding and vocabulary relating to the natural world around them.
- Teachers have discussed features of effective teaching and learning and produced an agreed lesson structure. They created helpful guidance and visuals to support this. Staff use these well to ensure consistent teaching and learning approaches across the school. Overall, teachers provide learning activities and resources that meet the needs of children. In most lessons, teachers set tasks and activities at an appropriate level of difficulty. A few children now require a brisker pace and further challenge in their learning.

- Support staff assist children well during lessons and when working with small groups. They help children to consolidate learning and support their emotional wellbeing effectively. They use questions, commentary and encouragement well to build children's self-esteem. This supports children to engage more confidently with learning.
- Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. They share the purpose of lessons in helpful ways. This supports children to understand how their tasks and activities link to other areas of learning. In most lessons, teachers make use of interesting or creative introductions which help to capture children's interest. They also encourage children to identify and talk about the transferable skills that they will be developing. In almost all lessons, teachers explain how to be successful. Children find this helpful. At times, teachers and children identify measures for success collaboratively. Across the school, children should be given opportunities to practise this skill more often. In a few lessons, teachers make effective use of plenary discussions to help children summarise and reflect on their learning. Teachers are skilled in using questioning to extend learning and to support children to practise higher-order thinking skills. Most children explain their answers clearly and offer thoughtful responses to open-ended questions.
- Teachers provide regular opportunities for younger children to learn through play. They should continue to review the balance of child-led experiences and direct teaching. Staff are skilful in their interactions and offer commentary that supports children's thinking. Children are developing a range of transferable skills. For example, they practise solving problems during block play. Staff should review the quality of spaces and resources to best meet children's needs. These should help children practise and apply their literacy and numeracy learning in different contexts. Staff should continue to engage with professional learning and national practice guidance to help deliver high-quality experiences. This should help to ensure that all children experience the appropriate level of challenge, building on their learning over time.
- Teachers make effective use of digital technologies to enhance learning and teaching. They employ interactive whiteboards, a range of applications and digital tools well to stimulate children's thinking and deepen their understanding. Children demonstrate well-developed digital knowledge and skills. For example, they use a range of programmable toys, online games and software independently. Teachers encourage children to use their critical literacy skills to evaluate and check information or answers found online. Children who require additional support also make regular use of digital tools to assist their learning, particularly in literacy. Recently, teachers developed a helpful progressive pathway that they are using well to support and build children's skills over time.
- Teachers use a range of formative assessment strategies during lessons to check children's understanding. They adapt their lesson or support children's learning further in response. Children engage in peer- and self-assessment regularly and feel this helps their progress. All staff give positive verbal feedback and encouragement to children. They provide written feedback in children's writing jotters which highlights strengths and includes useful next steps. Teachers should continue to develop approaches to feedback which support children to understand their next steps in learning and how to improve. Staff are beginning to explore more personalised learning targets with children, and this work should be developed further.
- The headteacher has established a school-wide assessment calendar. Staff find this helpful and it is used well to plan and carry out a well-considered range of assessments across the session. The headteacher and staff gather and analyse information gained from assessments

effectively. This includes using literacy and numeracy standardised assessments diagnostically to understand children's strengths and identify any gaps in learning. Teachers use assessment evidence and evaluations of taught lessons to inform their planning. This is helping to support children to make progress.

- This session, teachers have discussed national standards in school and with colleagues from their partnership school and local secondary, particularly in writing. A few staff have also been involved in moderation activities with staff from the local authority and nationally. These opportunities have increased teacher confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about children's attainment. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to moderate together across a range of curricular areas and with colleagues from other schools. This should help to embed a deep and shared understanding of children's progress and attainment.
- Teachers use local authority pathways and other materials to plan children's learning across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). They prepare detailed yearly overviews and termly plans. Teachers ensure that assessment is planned in conjunction with learning and teaching. Children contribute regularly to planning and teachers place a high priority on opportunities for personalisation and choice. For example, children suggest and vote on contexts for class learning. They also make decisions about how and where they would like to learn. This approach engages children in a wide variety of experiences. However, teachers should consider further how to structure children's contribution and choice. They should use their professional understanding of child development and CfE to tailor options offered to children.
- The headteacher and staff have clear systems in place to record and track children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They also monitor children's wellbeing. Each term, the headteacher and staff collate information about children's attainment and progress. They effectively identify, discuss and implement interventions for individuals who require further support. The headteacher should now support staff to analyse children's progress in more detail, including discussing groups such as gender and equity. As part of this work, the headteacher should refine aspects of the school's tracking and monitoring approaches. This should help staff to make links across tracking discussions and to monitor attainment and progress with more rigor over time.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Teachers make effective use of local authority and school-created progression pathways to plan and deliver the curriculum. They plan and teach several curriculum subjects linked by a context, such as social studies and science. This approach should continue to be refined. Teachers should consider further relevance and how they will provide depth and progression when selecting possible contexts for children's learning. They should help to build children's understanding of the school's local context and further deepen their knowledge of the history and culture of Scotland.
- As part of improvement work this session, the headteacher and staff have increased the time which children spend on literacy lessons each week. Staff should keep the balance of class timetables under review to ensure children receive regular experiences across the breadth of the curriculum.
- All children benefit greatly from a wide range of regular learning experiences outdoors and in the community. Staff work well with local partners, volunteers and community organisations to plan and provide experiences that support children's learning and achievements. For example, children enjoy working closely with local ranger services to learn more about sustainability and the environment. They also develop as effective contributors by supporting and helping with local community events, charities and competitions.
- Overall, children receive their entitlement to two hours high-quality physical education (PE) each week and make use of indoor and outside facilities. Teachers, sports partners and volunteers also support children very well to develop their physical activity, PE skills, confidence and teamwork through clubs and competitive sporting events. Children in P4 receive swimming lessons as part of a council programme.
- Children at all stages are taught French. Children learn and practise a range of vocabulary. Teachers should consider how to increase further children's confidence. Older children also learn Spanish. They understand a few greetings and simple phrases. Across the school, children explore Scots language through books, poems and school performances.
- Children are developing their understanding of different careers and the world of work. Staff have worked well with partners and parents to provide interesting events for children. As planned, staff should continue to build on this positive approach to help children to learn about important skills for life and work.
- Staff support children's learning pathways effectively as they move from nursery into P1 and from P7 to S1. They work well with nurseries and local secondary schools. During their P7 year, children meet secondary staff and participate in curriculum activities. Children grow in confidence and build on their learning well through this approach.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Staff have developed trusted relationship with parents through a partnership approach. As a result, most parents are comfortable approaching the school with any concerns. They feel that they are listened to.
- Staff use social media and the school website to share regular updates for parents. Staff share welcome updates about children's learning experiences using an online learning platform. Parents can use this platform to share news of their child's wider achievement outwith school. Parents enjoy using this platform and feel that this is helping to keep them more informed about their child's learning. The headteacher provides regular whole-school newsletters which enable parents to be more involved in the life of the school.
- The Parent Council works closely and effectively with staff through community events and fundraising activities. The headteacher shares plans for school improvement priorities and the use of PEF. Most parents agree that they are encouraged to be involved in the Parent Council and are kept well-informed about its work.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Almost all children feel that staff and their peers treat them fairly. Almost all children know there is a trusted adult they can speak to if they are upset. On the very few occasions when children display dysregulated behaviour, staff skilfully support them using a variety of well-chosen strategies. There is a focus on supporting children to identify ways they can support their own emotional wellbeing. Children feel cared for and nurtured by these approaches.
- Staff participated in professional learning focused on the principles of wellbeing. This approach is focussed on children's understanding of their own emotions. It is at the early stages of being embedded in the curriculum. Children are beginning to articulate their thoughts and feelings and why they may feel certain emotions. They are beginning to identify appropriate strategies they have started to use to support their emotional wellbeing. There are designated calm spaces around the school. Children access these areas when they feel that this will support their wellbeing. By using these areas, children demonstrate their ability to self-regulate whilst still maintaining contact with classmates. Children feel included and trusted by staff to use this approach appropriately.
- Children learn how to be safe in and around open water and how to use local woodlands responsibly. Children enjoy learning about their environment and are confident in describing ways that they can keep themselves and their friends safe. They identify hazards, learn to assess risk and apply strategies to limit risk. Children also learn how to be safe online. They are developing important life skills through these experiences and recognising how to keep safe in a variety of contexts.
- Teachers support children regularly to evaluate their own wellbeing. Staff review these evaluations to identify any child who may need support. They carefully consider which approaches will best meet the needs of each child. Children receive appropriate supports on both a one-to-one and group basis. Staff work with children to identify supports that best match their needs. Children feel that they are respected by staff and that their voice is heard.
- Staff and children lead a range of clubs and activities that encourage children to be active. Children suggest ideas for clubs and activities on a pupil voice noticeboard. They are confident that staff will do all they can to respond positively to such ideas. The clubs and activities support well the physical and mental wellbeing of children. Almost all children feel that the school helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle and to be active. They identify ways that

they can keep themselves healthy, make healthy food choices and the positive impact of their choices.

- Almost all staff know children and families very well. All staff have participated in a variety of professional learning to enable them to understand the learning needs of children well. Almost all children with barriers to learning are well supported. Staff work effectively with partners to best meet the needs of children. Staff feel more confident in their skills and knowledge of issues which can be barriers to learning through this work with partners. This inclusive approach is supporting children and their families sensitively and well. Teachers should continue to deepen their knowledge of effective strategies.
- Staff are aware of their statutory duties effectively in relation to wellbeing, equality and inclusion. The headteacher and staff carefully consider the needs of each child and assess the effectiveness of strategies to ensure these are having a positive impact. Children and families are supported as individuals with a clear focus on the most appropriate approach for each child.
- Senior leaders and staff maintain detailed, helpful overviews of children with additional support needs (ASN). These overviews provide a clear profile of children's identified needs and the strategies to support them. Teachers use these plans well when they consider appropriate effective intervention strategies to support all children. Teachers and support staff work closely and collaboratively when planning for children with ASN. Pupil support assistants provide effective support in individual and group settings for children facing barriers to their learning. Parents are included in regular reviews where appropriate. As a result, the needs of children with ASN are being met well. Senior leaders should consider how they can include children in these meetings and to develop targets that are meaningful for children. This should help children to feel more ownership of targets and support them to understand why they are accessing supports.
- Most children feel that staff in the school deal well with bullying. A few feel that that bullying behaviours are not always dealt with consistently well. The principal teacher recently led a review of the school's positive behaviour policy. This has been reviewed to ensure it reflects school values and clarifies approaches to responding to incidents of bullying. The headteacher and staff should continue to track incidences of bullying to monitor patterns and the effectiveness of any interventions.
- Staff have a planned programme to support children to understand world religions and cultures. Children learn about the importance of valuing diversity and challenging discrimination through assemblies and class discussions. Teachers consider class texts that will support children to understand the world around them. The school library has attractive texts that focus on diversity. Children can access these at their regular library visits. Teachers should consider the impact of the school's approach to further children's understanding of diversity.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

- At the time of the inspection, the school roll comprised of a small number of children in particular cohorts. As a result, attainment and progress will be expressed in overall statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Attainment in literacy and English and in numeracy and mathematics is good. Overall, most children achieve nationally expected levels. Across the school, a few children exceed these.
- Most children who receive additional support for their learning are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, most children make good progress in literacy and English. A few children could achieve at a quicker rate of progress.

Listening and talking

- Younger children share their ideas and views with enthusiasm. They demonstrate their understanding when asking and answering questions. Most older children contribute ideas confidently when working in pairs and groups. They listen carefully, justify their opinions and build on the ideas of others well. They are becoming more confident at taking notes when listening to information. Across the school, a few children should continue to practise turn-taking and respectful listening when working in groups.

Reading

- Younger children are particularly enthusiastic about stories and enjoy extending their comprehension skills through discussion. They use their increasing knowledge of sounds and patterns to read and understand words. Younger children should continue to learn and practise a range of reading strategies. They should benefit from revisiting and discussing features of non-fiction texts. Most older children read with increasing fluency and expression. They respond well to a range of questions and demonstrate a sound understanding of their texts. Older children are becoming more confident in applying their reading skills across the curriculum. They should continue to explore and discuss figurative language.

Writing

- Children write regularly for a variety of purposes across genres, such as reports, poetry and character descriptions. As appropriate to their age and stage, most children spell familiar words correctly and attempt to include ambitious vocabulary in their writing. A minority of younger children require further practice forming letters correctly. Supported by a new teaching and learning approach, most children are now including a wider range of punctuation, connectives and interesting openings in their texts. They should practise writing for real-life audiences and for different purposes across the curriculum regularly.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children should be supported further to build and extend their subject-specific mathematical vocabulary.

Number, money and measure

- Across the school, most children demonstrate a sound understanding of place value and rounding appropriate to their age and stage. Most younger children identify, recognise and order numbers accurately. They identify missing numbers in a sequence and count backwards or forwards from a given number. Younger children should be supported to increase the range of strategies they use for their mental calculations. Most older children understand and apply links between fractions, decimals and percentages. They demonstrate quick mental agility, completing calculations accurately, and apply their skills well to time and money. Older children explain their processes and solutions with increasing confidence. They should now explore and discuss the most efficient strategies when tackling different types of problems.

Shape, position and movement

- Children name and discuss properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects appropriate to their stage of learning. Younger children are developing their understanding of positional language well. They are less confident with right angles. Most older children demonstrate a sound knowledge of angles, compass points and bearings. A few should revisit work on complementary and supplementary angles.

Information handling

- Younger children use their counting skills well to understand pictograms and simple charts. They understand the concept of most and least popular. They should explore and discuss probability and chance. Most older children create and understand a range of graphs and charts, including using digital technology. Across the school, children should continue to practise collecting, displaying and discussing meaningful, real-life data regularly.

Attainment over time

- Historic school data of children's achievement of a CfE level is not wholly accurate or reliable. The headteacher and staff have now gathered a comprehensive range of information that helps them to better understand children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. This shows most children build on their attainment appropriately as they move through the school. This session, the headteacher and staff prioritised raising attainment in writing. This work has had a positive impact for most children. Staff have a deep understanding of individual children's attainment. The headteacher should now support them to consider and discuss attainment data in a greater range of ways. This should include

progress and outcomes for identified groups such as gender, equity or children who receive additional support.

- In June 2025, the school's overall attendance average was 95.1%, which is above the national average. Over recent years, the headteacher has worked well to increase school attendance figures. The number of children with attendance under 90% has significantly reduced. The headteacher monitors attendance effectively using local authority procedures. She communicates the importance of school attendance with parents regularly. The headteacher identifies any patterns of absence and works closely with children and families to address issues. This helps to improve children's attendance. Occasionally, children attend school on a part-time timetable within a personalised package of support. When this is required, it is well-managed and in line with local and national guidance.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Children are very proud of their own and others' achievements. Staff celebrate these well through assemblies and school displays. Children across the school share and talk about achievements from school experiences and from their home life. Older children demonstrate confidence, resilience and teamworking skills on a bi-annual residential trip they attend with peers from their partnership school. Children work very well together and in collaboration with staff and partners to achieve nationally accredited awards for their school. For example, they have received certificate awards for their work to promote sustainability and sport.
- Staff track each child's participation in achievement activities and clubs. They use this information effectively to identify and support any children at risk of missing out. The headteacher ensures that all children experience achievement across a range of contexts over time. Staff should now support children to discuss and make links between their achievements and the skills they have demonstrated.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a sound understanding of the socio-economic context of the rural school community. They consider ways to tackle issues such as affordable transport, travel times and social experiences. For example, children are offered clubs at lunchtime rather than after school as these are more accessible. Staff also provide a daily breakfast club at no cost to families, support with school uniform and subsidise excursions. Parents appreciate staff's sensitive approaches and children feel included and well-supported.
- The headteacher and staff identify gaps in learning or wellbeing for children who may face barriers or disadvantage. They use a range of information to plan and provide interventions and use PEF appropriately to support this work. This is helping to reduce attainment gaps within literacy. Senior leaders and staff should strengthen how they track and evaluate the impact of universal and targeted work. This should help them to select the interventions which are the most effective in accelerating children's progress in literacy and numeracy.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

On behalf of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.